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Short Subjects: Performance Planning for the Portland Program

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SHORT SUBJECTS



FEATURE

PERFORMANCE PLANNING FOR THE PORTLAND PROGRAM

The staff of the Portland (Oregon) Records Management Program was requested to prepare a performance plan for the 1980-81 fiscal year. Staff members were asked to chart plans for the year, describe goals and objectives, and to include the time frame for achieving various activities as well as the staff member or members responsible for accomplishing the tasks. Records management was not singled out in this activity. The director of the Office of General Services requested a work plan in line with overall city efforts at management planning from all of the bureaus and offices which he administered.

Portland, in company with many organizations and governments, has been attempting to improve the management of city government. Professionalization of management at most levels of city government has given rise to efforts to improve productivity, implement work standards, and develop public policy. These efforts were primarily directed toward the city budget process. Management analysts clustered in the budget office and the Office of Management Services promoted the development of goals and objectives and their by-product, performance measures.

The stated purposes of the goals and objectives program are broader than serving the budget function, however. They include providing management, planning, and fiscal information to managers, budget analysts, and

city council; and providing information to citizens on what city services are available and how the provision of these services is planned, budgeted, and controlled. Only a small proportion of the actual activities performed by an agency can be highlighted in a budget document and given the full treatment from goal down to measurable activity.

Not being thoroughly schooled in the theories and procedures of *management by objective*, the Records Management Program staff asked for briefing and assistance from the administrative services officer in General Services. After the initial instruction session, all of the professional staff members developed drafts of goals and objectives for their specific areas of responsibility as well as for the Records Management Program as a whole. In developing these drafts most of the staff approached the hierarchy from both directions--starting with a determination of the goals of the program and then laying out the intermediate objectives and the breakdown of activities to achieve the target goal.

At the same time, the staff examined their day-to-day activities trying to determine what objectives or goals these activities were serving to accomplish. If they had not already noted this as a program goal then it and the activity were added. With all of their drafts in hand, the professional staff met with the General Services administrative officer. On a two-yards-wide piece of paper the goals were laid out one by one with accompanying objectives and activities. All proposed goals were included except editing.

The next step involved categorizing goals, objectives, and activities to eliminate unnecessary overlap and duplication and distinguishing goals from objectives, and objectives from activities. It was not easy, although the staff had guidelines from the Bureau of Management and Budget. In the definitions provided, a goal is a statement of purposes directed toward an identified community need, whereas an objective is a desired result in which the achievement is measurable within a given time frame. As this was interpreted, it required a change in one of the goals which was to increase the use of records. According to the definitions, this was not really

a goal but an incomplete objective. Why did the record use need to increase and how did this relate to a community need? The goal was reformulated to read: "Maximize the value of records to the community through increased records use." In other words, give the community more value for the tax dollar used to create and preserve the records.

It is debatable whether the objectives that were developed to accomplish this goal are properly formulated, but they do set out desired results which can be measured (see accompanying appendix: Goal 2, Objectives 1-4). The primary criticism of these objectives is that they are general rather than specific. For objective 2, instead of reading "Increase community and scholarly awareness of resources"--which is general and does not define how it should be measured--it should have read, "Increase the number of visits from community and scholarly researchers by 20 percent in the second half of the year compared to the first half." For objective 3, concerning finding aids, our objectives should perhaps have read something like this: "Provide record group and series descriptions for 100 percent of permanent records, folder listings for 60 percent of all eligible records, and location listings for 100 percent of records in the records center."

The budget office instructions urged that the objectives be specific and understandable so that program administrators would be able to recognize when each had been met. A too general objective will define a direction, but will not establish how much progress toward the ultimate goal will be achieved. The objective should be feasible, however. Providing descriptions for 100 percent of all series may be a reasonable goal for a new project like Portland's, but for a historical society with a warehouse full of uninventoried records, such an objective would be unrealistic.

The final step in the process was to refine, define, and assign priorities as to time each activity would be accomplished. The staff was still working with its large sheets of paper, but numerous handwritten and typed sheets now overlaid the initial drafts, and it was quite a task to transfer the six-square-yard document

to typed 8½-by-11-inch paper.

The Records Management Program has had a year in which to evaluate the usefulness of the performance planning process and the plans which resulted. The following benefits have been realized:

1. It served to demonstrate to the staff of the program that the various parts of the program carried out by each individual related to each other and were necessary to achieve the goals of the program. The plan clearly demonstrated the integration of archival and records management functions in the Portland program. It was useful to see that the archivist speaking to neighborhood groups served the same goal as the records management technicians conducting training sessions for city employees.
2. The performance plan gave the director of General Services a much clearer idea of what the records management program was all about. The program had been moved administratively from the Office of City Auditor to the Office of General Services, and the director had not understood fully what it was he was taking on.
3. It made the budget process much easier. By the time records management had to prepare its service level packages for the budget hearings, the staff knew what they were trying to achieve and merely had to select the most important goals, objectives, and activities and prepare performance measures for them to be used in the budget documents. The preparation made the program's services easier to defend in the budget hearings as well.
4. It provided a basis for evaluation; namely, is the program achieving the goals it set out to achieve? In this regard, however, it is well to exercise some caution to avoid being too tied to performance measurement as an evaluation of work performance. It should be used as guideposts for orienting the thrust of the program and for prioritizing--where the program is going to devote its resources and which activities should be emphasized to accomplish the highest priority goals and objectives. With this caution in mind, the performance plan can be used

to look back over the year and see whether all the hard work has achieved the desired results. It is all too often the case that individual employees or an entire program staff can be busy, hardworking, and productive, but the essential services are not being achieved. Setting the goals and evaluating their accomplishment can remedy that situation.

The staff did not accomplish all they set out to do; in fact, the plan may be described as an inventory of what was intended. It was valid in all but the time frames. Therefore, it may serve better as a five-year plan. An example of this time frame problem was the archivist's intention to speak to neighborhood groups. In the performance plan, that activity was slated to start in the third quarter of the fiscal year. That had been based on moving into the newly remodeled Portland Archives and Records Center in January 1981. The move was not actually made until June. Thus, the move and related activities more properly took place in the 1981-82 fiscal year rather than the previous year. The emphasis in 1981-82 has been in creating a finding aids system. The staff detailed a specific activity: "Produce an updatable, indexed archives guide." It is nearing publication, but it is considerably behind schedule. The guide and the records center are prerequisites to much of the other activity and should have been activities listed in the fiscal 1980-81 plan, saving the other activities for the next year and beyond.

When the director was asked whether the Records Management Program was going to do another performance plan, he said they would, but it would be less elaborate the second time around. The staff feels that performance planning has been valuable and will be of even greater value as they become more skillful in drafting and implementing the plan and in evaluating their progress toward established goals and objectives.

Because of the benefits they have gained from the use of a performance plan, the records management staff recommends the exercise for other institutions. One of the major steps is determining what should be included in the institution's hierarchy of goals, objectives, and activities. One suggestion for establishing the goals of

an institution is to review what professional organizations say the goals of a program should be. Though the archival profession may not have a *statement of goals* for an archival agency, the "Statement of Principles" and "Questionnaire" developed by the Task Force on Institutional Evaluation and published in the January 1980 *SAA Newsletter* provide an excellent framework for developing a performance plan for an archival institution, or for the archival element in a records management program. It was intended for evaluation, but it would work equally well for planning of activities and emphases.

Initially, it appeared that the evaluation standards provided goals for the Records Management Program, but on closer examination it was found that just as the Portland Records Management Program's first try toward establishing a goal ended up being an objective, so the "Statement of Principles" lays out activities for an archival institution, and the "Questionnaire" suggests activities to carry out the objectives. For example, "Statement of Principles" number 7 refers to physical facilities. If, in evaluation of one's program, physical facilities are found to be below standard, improvement may be felt to be a priority. The statement itself may be framed as an objective. In other words, what goals would it serve--stewardship of community owned resources or enhancement of preservation and access for community benefit? Each of the questions could be reframed as an activity in support of the objective; for example, reorganize furniture and work areas to provide receiving and processing areas.

Use of the evaluation standards will serve to start the performance planning project. Once the staff has had some experience in drafting and revising the hierarchy it will be easier to determine what program elements could be stressed and developed in greater detail. The experience at Portland with performance planning has been positive, and the planning will continue. Other archives and records institutions should try it and experience the benefits in improved management and increased program understanding by staff, sponsors, and users.

Liisa Fagerlund

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE PLAN
FY 1980-1981

Mission Statement: *Provide the city with efficient, cost-effective control and management of its information resources.*

Goal 1: *Improve the city government's ability to generate information in a more cost-effective manner.*

Objective 1: *Determine the need for a city-wide forms management program.*

Activity	Measure
1. Perform needs analysis.	
2. If need identified, present cost/benefits to Council.	Policy statement to pursue activity.
3. Establish activity if Council so directs.	

Objective 2: *Advise bureaus on methods to enhance efficient data gathering, recording, and dissemination.*

Activity	Measure
1. Identify appropriate technologies in records creation, e.g., possible word processing applications, computer applications, active office microfilm applications.	Assist Planning Bureau's Historic Sites Inventory data gathering activity through SPINDEX use. Continue identification.
2. Assist bureaus design better records creation and management systems, i.e., work flow planning, correspondence control.	Assist Metro Arts Commission in identifying cost-effective word processing applications for arts collection. Continue identification.
3. Ascertain cost-effectiveness in current records production systems and compare with model systems.	Identify similar bureau projects for implementation in FY 1981-1982.

Goal 2: *Maximize value of records through increased records use.*

Objective 1: *Increase employee awareness of records resources.*

Activity	Measure
1. Hold ten city-wide training sessions: 2 forms, 2 word processing, 4 disposition, and 2 open.	Maintain 85% participant evaluation.
2. Hold in-bureau training sessions.	One per targeted bureau.
3. Develop training plans and aids.	Produce necessary aids to support ten training sessions.

Objective 2: Increase community and scholarly awareness of information resources in city government.

Activity	Measure
1. Give tours and talks for targeted service groups program outreach, e.g., neighborhood associations, scholarly community.	Two tours and four Neighborhood Associations presentations.
2. Work with school district to develop curriculum packets.	Develop prototype packet.

Objective 3: Establish usable finding aids and retrieval systems for active and archival records.

Activity	Measure
1. Investigate alternative electronic transmission of data from Records Center.	Report to Director, OGS.
2. Provide centrally produced file labels and encourage use for administrative files.	Meet bureau requests for labels.
3. Produce an updatable, indexed archives guide.	Print guide.
4. Serve as a central information point for records resources.	Provide successful identification for 90% of requests.
5. Provide expertise on filing and automated indexing systems to bureaus, on a consultant basis if necessary, and improve filing efficiency through files reorganization.	Respond to requests and develop sufficient BUD-5s to meet city expenditures.

6. **Maintain an accurate shelf list.** To be determined.

Objective 4: Provide physical access to city records.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Measure</i>
1. Provide reference and retrieval service.	Maintain a 24 hour retrieval time.
2. Train staff in reference techniques.	Monthly review sessions.
3. Provide photocopy service.	Comply with and produce receipts for 100% of requests.
4. Implement use of electronic transfer, if feasible.	Implement Report to OGS.
5. Maintain reshelving backlog to a manageable size.	To be determined.

Goal 3: Maximize benefits achievable through compliance to the city's records maintenance system (Ordinance 146843).

Objective 1: Secure bureau compliance with schedules.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Measure</i>
1. Assist bureaus to implement retention and disposition schedules—target bureaus: Police, Fire, Buildings, HRB, PDC, Auditor's Office, Expo-Rec, and assist incoming Mayor's Office.	To be determined.
2. Audit bureau records for compliance once every three or five years or as circumstances warrant.	One model audit.

Objective 2: Maintain record schedules with accurate descriptive and retention data for each city agency.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Measure</i>
1. Update schedules.	Meet schedule change requests 100%.
2. Develop a more efficient cost-effective schedule	Changed system.

maintenance procedure.

3. Develop schedules for newly created bureaus. 100% of needs.
4. Reduce retention spans in individual records series while maintaining information integrity. Document reduced retention span compared to original span.

Objective 3: Reduce the cost of records retention by timely disposition: centralizing non-current records and eliminating valueless records.

Activity	Measure
1. Establish annual file breaks in city files system.	Establish file breaks in targeted bureaus.
2. Transfer potentially archival or administratively useful inactive records to Record Center.	Transfer 100% of identified eligibles.
3. Recycle or destroy inactive records after they have reached the end of their retention period.	100% of destructible records.

Goal 4: Create a multi-faceted management program to provide complete records management services.

Objective 1: Secure regional government use of Records Center.

Activity	Measure
1. Present to the various managements concerned the economic advantages of a centrally administered records repository.	Target participation for 2nd stage: PSU, PCC.
2. Plan for refurbishing first level of Records Center.	Operational center (March, 1981).
3. Plan, develop, and implement procedure for regional records center.	Develop procedure for participating jurisdictions.

Objective 2: Guarantee that records management program meets city needs.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Measure</i>
1. Design a feedback system for gathering information to ascertain the effectiveness of records management.	Secure necessary bureau concurrence statement.
2. Further plan and develop procedures for the Record Center.	Develop internal procedures manual.
3. Develop with Budget Office participation a recognized benefit schedule for records management activities.	Joint Budget Office/RM Report to Director, OGS and Budget Officer.
4. Increase bureau's use of Auditor's ordinance and resolution's files.	Determine cost of appropriate indexing system.
5. Increase Public Works use of Auditor's A, B, and C files to eliminate duplication of files.	Determine cost of appropriate indexing system.
6. Analyze cost-effectiveness of Auditor's microfilm service.	Report to Director, OGS.
7. Develop with Personnel Bureau the personnel cost in program transition, forms management, and increased program responsibility.	Report to OGS Director and Personnel.

Objective 3: Secure outside funding for special projects.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Measure</i>
1. Investigate the possibility of a grant to integrate PPS and Metro into city records system.	Grant proposal.
2. Investigate the possibility of a grant to provide an updatable and cost-effective ordinance index.	Grant proposal.
3. Investigate the possibility of a grant to assist Public Works and citizen use of Auditor's A, B, and C files.	Grant proposal.